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Planning and adorning the farmstead

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Bulletin No. 126

February, 1912

PLANNING AND ADORNING THE FARMSTEAD



AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
IOWA STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND THE MECHANIC ARTS

HORTICULTURE AND FORESTRY SECTION

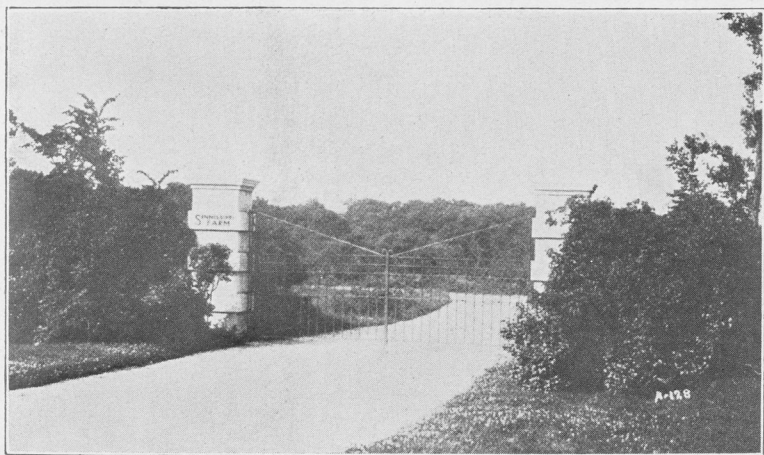
Ames, Iowa

THE COUNTRY BEAUTIFUL

“**B**ELIEVING in the gospel of good things, I pledge myself to beautify and keep beauteous the landscape from my upper window. The four sides of my habitation shall be without offense to the sense of my neighbor or the stranger within my sight. The way before my door, my neighbor's door, or the thoroughfare of trade I will not abuse or put to unworthy use. In every way consistent with my station and citizenship, I will encourage tidiness by word and example, I will help to make the country beautiful.”

PLANNING AND ADORNING THE FARMSTEAD

BY A. T. ERWIN



An Attractive Entrance Way to the Farmstead

Neat, conveniently arranged buildings, a well-kept lawn attractively bordered with trees and shrubs add greatly to the appearance and value of the farm and to the happiness of its occupants.

The farmstead, including as it does the general area occupied by the farm buildings, house and lawn, is the center of activity for the farm. Its planning and development, both from the standpoint of convenience and of securing an attractive landscape effect, deserve special consideration.

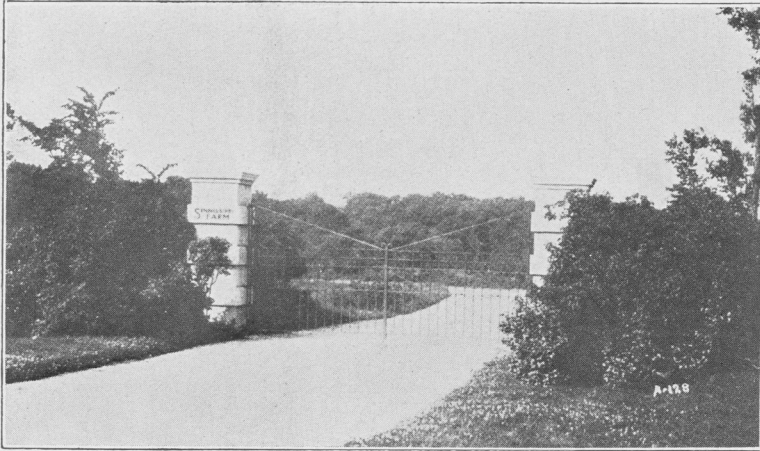
A well-thought-out plan is the first requisite to get these results, as in the absence of a definite scheme serious mistakes are likely to be made. This plan should include the location of buildings, drives, walks, trees, shrubbery, and every other feature which contributes either to the convenience or ornamentation of the place. It should be developed with the larger relationships always in mind. The location of the house and farm buildings is the first consideration. Even though it happens that some or all of these are already on the ground, a plan for their location is important. New farm homes are erected to supplant old ones and other new farm structures are added, which make practicable a general consideration of the entire building scheme. Ma-

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A Good Illustration of what can be Accomplished in a Few Years.

This home was established some twenty years ago on the bare, bleak prairies of northern Iowa. With a little care and planning the surroundings have been made beautiful and attractive. There is a goodly list of varieties of trees, shrubs and vines that succeed in this section. The problem is largely one of intelligent interest and initiative on the part of the owner.

terial improvement can often be made in a farmstead by a readjustment as new buildings are put up, though the best results are obtained where things are planned right from the start.

In selecting a site for the house, good drainage is the first requisite. A south or east slope is generally to be preferred while a north slope is undesirable. In its location give the house greatest prominence. The farmstead first of all provides a home and the residence should stand out as the central and most conspicuous feature of the picture. To place the barn and other buildings in front of the house is to reverse the logical order of things. Locate the house back far enough from the highway to afford privacy and give a good stretch of lawn in front, and yet



 The Barn in Front of the House—an Illogical Arrangement

not so far back as to suggest a spirit of exclusion, nor with a lawn so large that it cannot be properly cared for. Most city door-yards are too small while many of those in the country are so large that it is impracticable to give them lawn treatment.

The location and grouping of the general farm buildings is a perplexing problem and each place presents its own peculiar conditions and difficulties. The most common mistakes occur in the location of buildings as to convenience. The corn crib should be located near the particular feeding-place that will call for the bulk of its supply and the toolshed where the implements can be taken up or dropped enroute to or from the field. In this connection the importance of providing enough shed room for the tools and general equipment needs emphasis. The promiscuous

scattering of machinery about the barnyard always gives a place an air of carelessness and neglect and detracts much from its appearance, while the weathering of the machinery causes a serious economic loss. The watering-trough and workshop call for a central location.

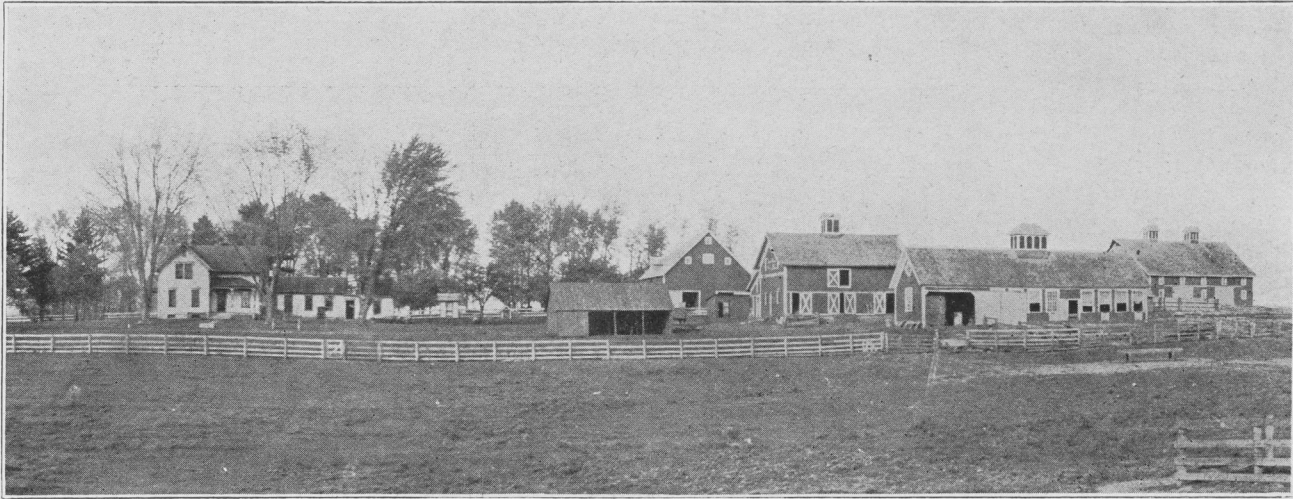
The general farm buildings should be to the rear of the farmhouse and the stable at least 150 or 200 feet away. Locate them to avoid odors being carried to the house by the summer winds. So far as practicable, arrange the farm buildings to serve as a



“Tidiness, like everything else worth having, comes only by effort, but it is worth all it costs with a nice margin of profit.”

windbreak. Locate the yards on the side farthest from the house, though it is often an advantage to provide a paddock near the highway for the display of the farm herds.

The business side of the farm must not be lost sight of and special features of the general building equipment may be given prominence, such as the seedhouse or any other important feature of the place. In landscaping the farmstead it is not the idea to obscure their presence but rather to secure an orderly arrangement of the buildings and to have the front side to the front and the back side to the rear.



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A Rear View, Showing a good Equipment of Farm Buildings.

The appearance of this farmstead is much improved by the neat and tidy condition of things surrounding its buildings. Everything seems to have its place, and there is a suggestion that everything is in its place. Note the covered farm scales with their suggestion of business management on this farm.



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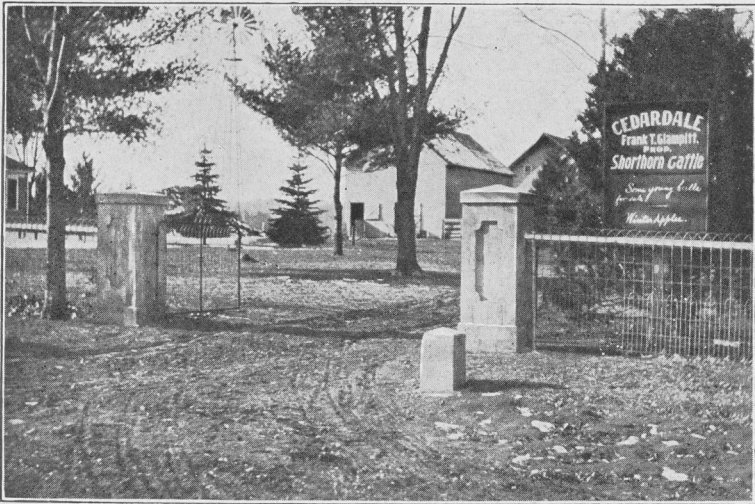
Rural Life as it Can Be in Iowa.

This place is planted very largely to native trees and shrubs. In selecting varieties for planting it is well to give special attention to hardiness and freedom from insect and fungous troubles. Our native trees and shrubs have much to commend them in this regard. The scarlet oak, the hackberry and the hard maple are unequalled for Iowa planting.

The white elm shown above is the finest of shade trees for this section.

DRIVES, WALKS AND GATEWAYS.

The main driveway should enter from the direction of the heaviest traffic. As suggested in the accompanying plan, it may be desirable to provide two drives, one leading directly to the barnyard for the heavy traffic and the other to serve the house, with a return loop for visitors. In locating drives, attention should be given to the matter of grades. Steep grades are objectionable and should be avoided whenever possible. It is often practicable to do this by following around the hill, thereby securing not only an easy grade but also a long, sweeping curve which will make a more attractive drive.

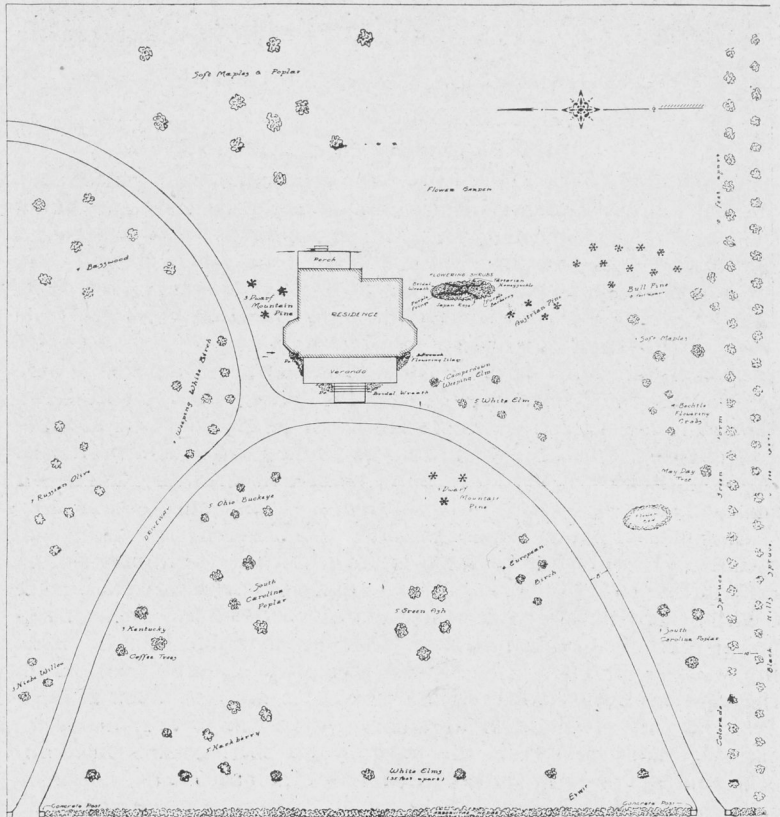


The Bulletin Board Serves a Useful Purpose

Massive concrete posts of a neat design may be appropriately used to mark in a formal way the entrance to the farmstead. Here also is a good location for the bulletin board, giving the name of the place, the proprietor, and other information. Every farm should have a name. It gives to the place a dignity and individuality that is otherwise lacking. Iowa now has a law permitting the registration of farm names and affording legal protection therefor. Keep all other signs off. The use of farm buildings as bill boards for the advertising of tobacco, etc., is cheapening. It not only detracts from the looks of a place but is an illogical thing to do. The owner should work up a reputation for his own goods and advertise his own products in an appropriate way.

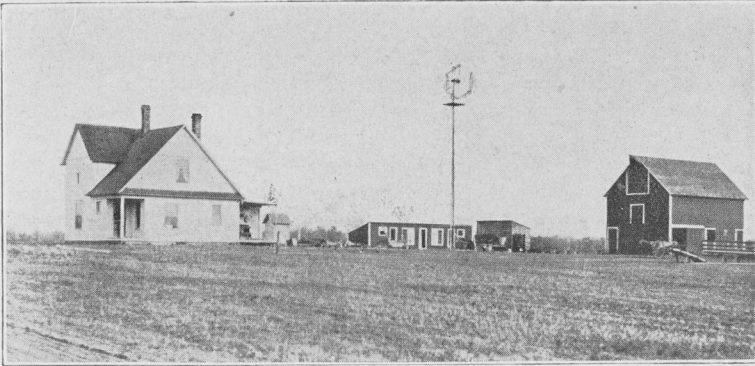
Since the majority of the country people ride rather than walk,

there is little demand for front walks, which are wholly a matter of convenience rather than beauty. When built, they should lead in the direction people desire to go. Long, circuitous routes around a semi-circle are unnatural and do not represent good planning. It has been suggested that the best way to locate a walk is to find out where people want to go by first permitting them to form a path and take that as the location. This does not mean, however, that walks must always be in straight lines. Often a gentle curve can be introduced so as not to be objectionable from the standpoint of distance and to give a pleasing landscape effect. In such instances it may be desirable to plant a tree or clump of shrubs on the inside of the curve to give an apparent reason for the deviation.



Good Example of a Planting Plan.

It shows the location of every group of shrubs and every tree, their names, and number required. This drawing is on a scale of about eighty feet to the inch.



Good Buildings, but Lacking in the Shade and Adornment of Trees.

THE PLANTING OF TREES.

As one of the larger features of the landscape, the location and number of trees are of special importance. In selecting kinds the size of tree at maturity should be considered. The white elm, for example, may attain a spread of one hundred feet, while the green ash or white birch will hardly exceed one-fourth of that. Do not overplant the lawn. By filling up the front yard the landscape effect is not only destroyed but the buildings are obscured or entirely hidden. From the sanitary point of view this is also undesirable for it encourages dampness. Keep the trees back far enough to permit a free circulation of air and plenty of sunshine. Overshading is bad for a building and under these conditions the shingles decay quickly. As a protection against the afternoon sun, a shade tree or two to the southwest of the house is desirable.

In general, plant along the sides to border or frame in the picture. In this way a vista is formed with the house as the central feature. Most people err in getting things into the wrong location rather than in the selection of varieties to plant. Keep an open front. Immediately in front of the house there is nothing so appropriate as a well-kept stretch of greensward. Keep the tree planting mostly along the sides and in placing them avoid a stiff, mechanical arrangement. If an evergreen is located so many feet from the walk on one side, do not place another one at a corresponding distance on the other side. Avoid a stiff checker board plan and plant the trees more in clumps, securing the effect of a curve rather than a straight line, so that the whole will be as natural as possible. A limited number of tall trees to the rear of the house is useful for a background and the



An Over-planted Yard.

pictorial effect thus secured is a vast improvement over that of the building which stands out against a bare sky-line.

LOCATING SHRUBBERY.

One of the most common mistakes in planting shrubbery is to scatter it about over the lawn in a salt and pepper fashion. The way to secure a satisfactory effect is by grouping. Place shrubs in a mass about the border, particularly to screen off the back yard from the front, and in the corners about the porch or along the base of the building. Plant them about two and one-half feet apart, placing the taller kinds, such as the bush honey-suckle and lilac, in the back, with the lower kinds, such as the bridal wreath, in front. The shrubs should be cultivated or mulched for the first year or two after planting, after which they become sufficiently established to shade the ground and take care of themselves.

If flowers are grown primarily for cut flowers, line them out in a straight row in the garden where they can be cultivated conveniently. For ornamental beds, place them in a border two and one-half or three feet in width along the front of the shrubbery. Here the shrubbery serves as a background against which the colors stand out much better than they will in the open. Moreover, this location avoids cutting the lawn with beds which make unsightly holes during the winter.

PLANTING LIST.

The following is offered as a selected list of trees and shrubs for the Iowa planter. Only reputable and well established varieties of known hardiness are named. The list is not complete and is meant only to be suggestive. Many of our native trees and shrubs deserve special mention in this connection as they are not only hardy and comparatively free from insect and fungous pests but also have good decorative qualities, as attested by the fact that they command a ready price in the nurseries in the regions to which they are not native. It is further suggested in making up the list of shrubbery that attention be given to the matter of the succession of bloom periods. The Juneberry blossoms very early in the spring, for example, other varieties in late spring, midsummer, and so on. In this way something attractive can be had in flower throughout the open season.

SHADE TREES.

Much of the early tree planting in Iowa was of quick growing and short-lived types such as the box elder and soft maple. Future plantings should be on a more permanent basis and of a better class of trees such as the white elm and oaks.

White elm,
Hard maple,
Soft maple,

Black cherry,
Basswood,
Ohio buckeye,



Plant Shrubbery in Clumps; do not Scatter single Specimens over the Yard.

Green ash,
Red oak,
Scarlet oak,
European birch,
Hackberry,

Carolina poplar,
Niobe willow,
Golden willow,
Russian olive.

EVERGREENS.

(For full information concerning evergreens, consult Bulletin 90 of the Iowa Experiment Station.)

Douglas spruce,
Norway spruce,
European larch,
Silver fir,
Red cedar.
White spruce,

White pine,
Austrian pine,
Dwarf mountain pine,
Scotch pine,
Blue spruce,

SHRUBS.

High bush cranberry,
Snowball,
Juneberry,
Bush honey-suckle,
Siberian dogwood.

Mock Orange.
Bridal wreath,
Nine-bark,
Japanese lilac,
French lilac,

ORNAMENTAL HEDGE PLANTS.

Hawthorn,
Buckthorn,
Polish privet.
Amour barberry,

Dwarf barberry,
Common barberry,
Purple-leaf barberry,

VINES.

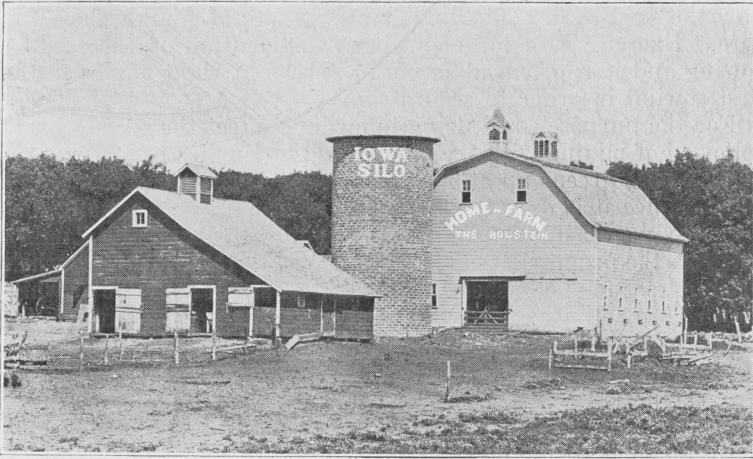
Clematis jackmanii,
Clematis paniculata,
Trumpet honey-suckle.

Boston ivy,
Engelman ivy,
Bitter sweet,

TRIMMING TREES.

The climate of our state is more or less severe upon tree life of all kinds. Trees are frequently injured by the splitting down of the branches due to sleet-storms and severe winds. This condition requires pruning to insure the proper healing over of the wound, otherwise decay enters in and the life of the tree may be seriously shortened. In removing injured branches, particular pains should be taken to make the cut up close to the remaining branch and parallel to it. Under these conditions the wound is nourished and gradually heals over. Healing does not take place where a stub is left and decay gradually works down into the main stem. For cuts over two inches in diameter the surface should be coated with thick white lead.

In this connection the practice of topping back large trees, such as the soft maple, should be discouraged. This can in no manner change a soft-wooded tree to a hard-wooded kind and in the majority of instances the central portion of the large stub dies back and decays, leaving only a shell of live bark around the circumference, and in a few years the tree goes to pieces and is



A good Windbreak Contributes both Comfort and Beauty.

ready for the brush-pile. It must also be remembered that the leaf system takes part in the work of digestion and that a large tree entirely defoliated in this fashion has been treated in a very severe manner.

LAWN MAKING.

The first requisite in securing a good lawn is a rich black loam. It frequently happens that in excavating for the basement the clay soil is disposed of by spreading it over the front yard, thus leaving a very unsatisfactory soil for the lawn. Where this is done the top soil should first be taken off to a depth of 5 or 6 inches and replaced after the clay has been deposited. Similarly in back-filling around the foundation, debris of all kinds is dumped in. This is apt to cause trouble later in settling and also makes a very unsatisfactory soil with which to establish either grass or shrubs.

Grade the lawn first and then thoroughly pulverize the soil for seeding. In Iowa the best time to seed is early in the spring, though in many seasons a very good stand can be secured by sowing the seed about the middle of August or just preceding the fall rains. Fall seeding, however, is more or less uncertain on account of the lack of moisture supply. In the case of fall seeding, it is advisable to mulch the lawn the first winter with strawy manure as soon as the ground is frozen hard enough to bear up a team. This should be raked off in the spring when the growth begins. The best turf is that formed by Kentucky bluegrass. The Canada bluegrass is sometimes used but this is not as good.

Sow the seed rather thickly, say at the rate of four bushels per acre. Exercise care to get an even distribution of the seed in sowing and it is often advisable to re-seed at right angles to the first sowing in order to secure this.

For the purpose of securing immediate effect the plan is often followed of mixing with the blue grass the English or Italian ryegrass. This greens up at once and makes a very good temporary turf. Since it is only temporary in character, it gradually dies out, leaving the blue-grass in possession. In using the English ryegrass the proportion commonly followed is that of three bushels of bluegrass to one bushel of ryegrass. A slight sprinkle of white clover is sometimes added as a temporary turf. Many follow the practice of sowing oats or rye with bluegrass. This in our opinion, is not advisable. Both of these plants make a coarse stubble unsuited for the lawn and they are gross feeders. Instead of being a nurse crop they rob the grass of its moisture and food supply and also shade it too much.

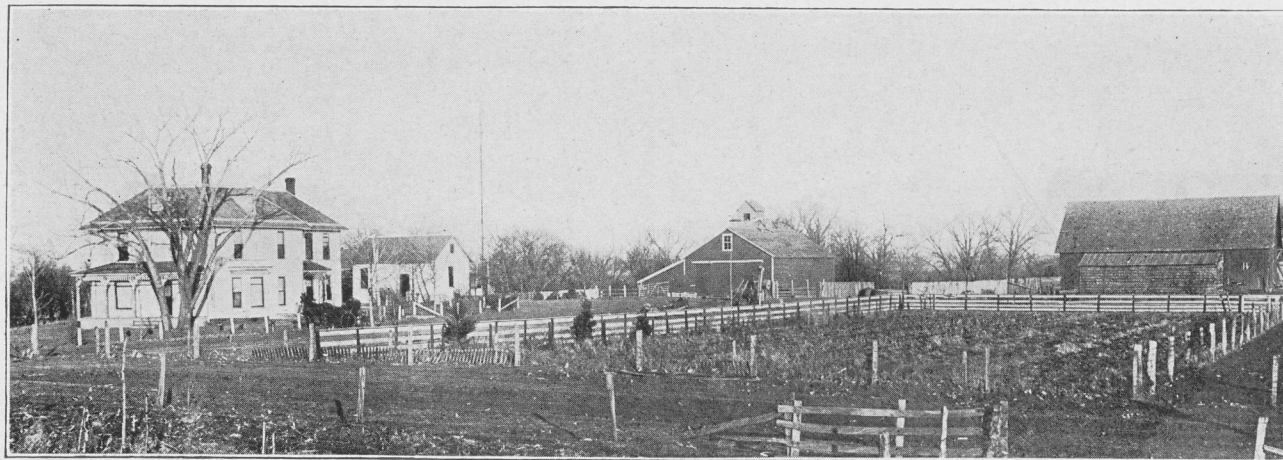
MOWING THE LAWN.

Begin mowing just as soon as the grass is tall enough as this cutting causes the plant to bunch and stool-out, thus securing a thicker turf. Set the lawn mower high, however; in fact, close cutting is not advisable in any case. Stop the mowing in time in the autumn to let the grass make a good top growth for winter protection.

On the newly established lawn there is apt to be trouble with weeds of many kinds. Most of the coarser weeds will not stand close cutting and are killed out the first year by the use of the lawn mower. There are a few, however, including the dandelion, which are not affected in this way. For the eradication of these, iron sulfate has been recommended, but its value for this purpose seems quite doubtful.

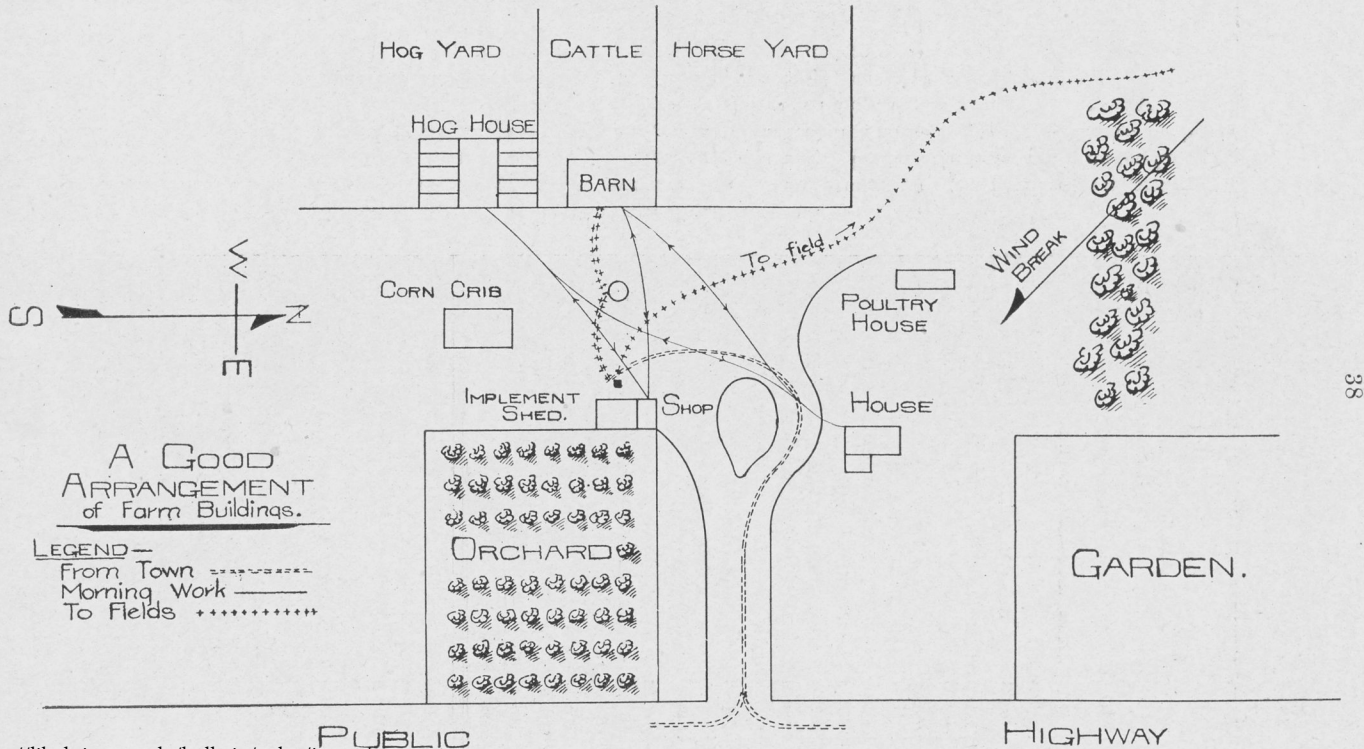
In applying manure to the lawn take care to secure material as free as possible from weed seed. Nitrate of soda is often preferable for fertilizing because it is free from impurities. Use this at the rate of 200 pounds per acre and apply it at the beginning of the growing season.

Rolling is a good practice for the lawn as it closes the cracks early in the spring and also shoves the crowns of the plant back into place, thus correcting the heaving which has taken place during late winter.



An Attractive Farmstead.

This farmstead has many features to commend it and it gives the impression of being thoroughly practical in its arrangement. Particular attention is directed to the location of the milk house, shop and barn. Perhaps the latter is a little too far from the house. The disposition very often is to locate the barn too far from the house for sanitary reasons. If heed is given the drainage, prevailing wind direction and such things, the barns need not be so far removed. The farm garden is well located in a convenient place and where it is quite sure to receive the attention it deserves.



An actual farmstead plan which exemplifies the principles of good arrangement.

PLANNING THE FARM IN RELATION TO THE FARMSTEAD

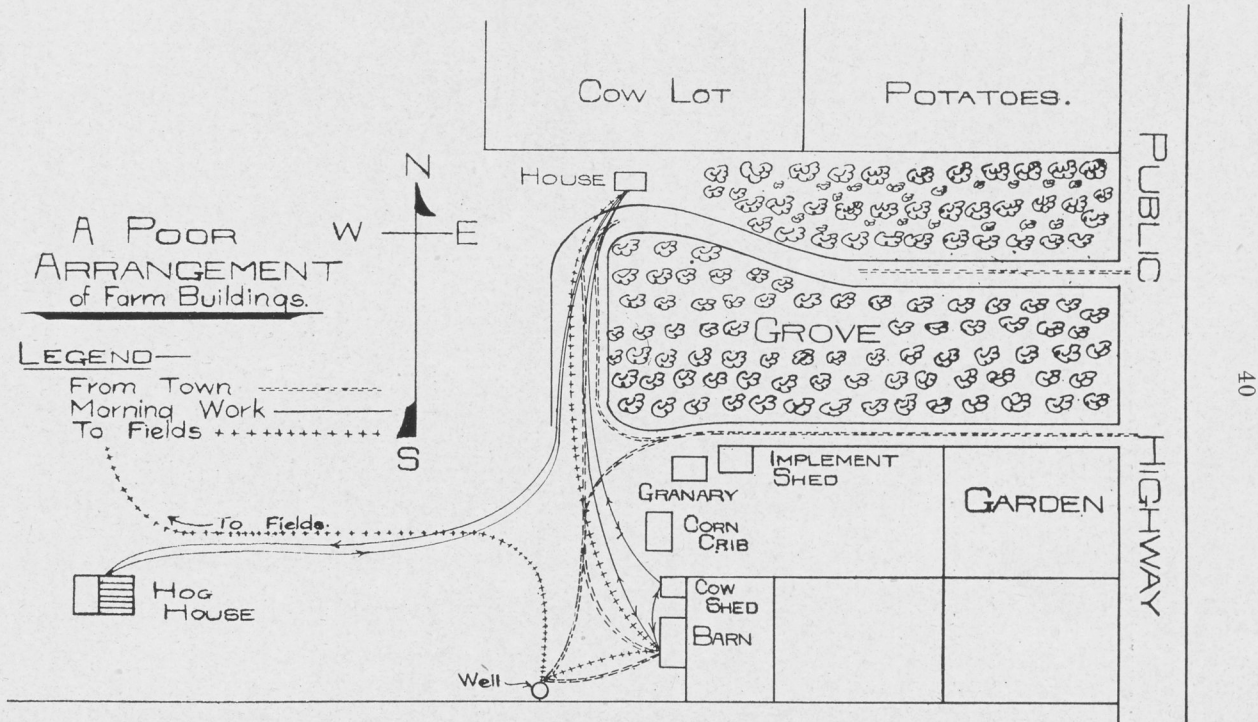
BY J. B. DAVIDSON,

Department of Agricultural Engineering.

An investigation of the loss of time and energy upon Iowa farms on account of an inconvenient arrangement of the fields, roads and buildings indicates that farm planning should be given much greater consideration than it now receives. An inconvenient placing of the feed room, for example, in reference to the barns and house may mean only a few hundred extra feet of travel or a few extra minutes every day in caring for the live stock of the farm, but the accumulated loss for a year or number of years becomes enormous. For instance, the walking of three hundred feet twice a day amounts to over forty miles a year and in like manner fifteen extra minutes twice a day amounts to over eighteen days, of ten hours each, per year.

A good way to plan the arrangement of the farm, including the location of the various farm buildings, roads to the field, etc., is to prepare a sketch or map upon which the routes may be traced which must be followed in doing the day's work, including the morning and evening chores and a trip to town or other places of traffic. The accompanying sketch shows such routes and attention is called to the convenience secured. It is true that upon most farms the fields and buildings are already located, yet adjustments are made from time to time and these should be made according to well-thought-out plans in order that the general arrangement may improve rather than grow less convenient. To assist in laying out the farm and planning the farmstead, the following general considerations are suggested. Perhaps it will not be possible to incorporate all of these principles in any one plan, yet they represent advantages which should be secured if possible, though it is realized that each farm is a problem in itself.

1. Have the fields as nearly the same size as possible in order to facilitate crop rotation.
2. Have as many fields as possible in direct connection with the barn lot.
3. Size of fields should be in proportion to size of entire farm.
4. Land of the same quality should be in the same inclosure.



An actual farmstead plan which is obviously inconvenient. Note the waste ground and the excessive travel required to care for the livestock.

5. Where there are streams on the farm, arrange the fields to border on them so as not to interfere with cultivation and to be more convenient for watering stock or irrigation.
6. Avoid needless fences on account of cost and maintenance.
7. Have the buildings near the center of the farm, giving due consideration to other advantages.
8. A pasture should be adjacent to the buildings.
9. Buildings should occupy poorest ground.
10. Buildings should be located in reference to water supply.
11. Buildings should be on a slight elevation whenever possible.
12. A south or east slope is desired.
13. Soil for buildings should be dry and well drained.
14. A timber windbreak should be secured.
15. A garden plot should be near house.
16. Buildings should not be located on high hills because inaccessible from field or roads.
17. Buildings should not be placed in low valleys on account of lack of air and drainage and danger of frosts.
18. Buildings should be located on the side of the farm nearest the school, church, and town.
19. Lots should be on the farther side of barn from house and screened from the house by trees.
20. All buildings should serve as windbreaks.
21. A farm scale is useful and should be placed in a convenient place.
22. The shop and machine shed should be convenient to house, barn and fields.

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